

a parakeet in a green plastic cage
and battery television.
When I spotted the traveler,
I was so intent on reaching him,
I walked past the mini-bus named "Utopia,"
past the red-haired cowgirl
and the Latin-looking man with five poodles;
I almost stumbled over the old couple
announcing the end of the world.
I took one of their pamphlets that warned
we would all be devoured pretty soon
by a beast that resembles Godzilla,
but I brushed them off politely
and made my way toward the stranger
with sad, familiar eyes.
I thought he might be a relative of mine
for he looked like a misplaced dreamer
or a failed chicken farmer
who had come to this rest area
like some kind of mid-American
ancient mariner.
I thought he was eating his lunch
for he had an egg in his hand
but he didn't crack it or eat it.
He just looked at it, turning it around.
He stared at the egg.
Then he looked at me.
I looked at him.
He looked at the egg again, reflectively.

And then I asked him.
Clutching my Portable Sherwood Anderson,
standing in an obscure rest area on Interstate 80
somewhere west of Rawlins, or Davenport, or Gary,
I stammered my question.
"Mister -- don't I know you from somewhere?
You famous or something?"

"Could be," he answered.
"No one knows more about eggs than I do."

THE DRAWING INSTRUCTOR

I will teach you
an old drawing class trick.
If you want to draw
a straight line,
make a dot
where you want your line
to end up.

Place your pencil
where you want the line
to begin.

As you draw
look only at the dot.
Do not look at the pencil.
Do not look at the line.
Do not look at your
moving hand.
Your line
will be tolerably straight.

Your line is not
straight enough?
Then carry a yardstick.
I have nothing more
to say to you.

-- Barbara Drake

Okemos MI

HOW TO SHARPEN THE CARPET KNIFE

Press the blade
on the stone right where you want the curve
(smooth even strokes
without forcing the edge
upon its quick)
and it will sharpen in a crescent.
The sharpness
and the angle of the curve
as you hold it to the jute
will do your work.

SECURITY

"They give you free lunch
and a little box of food for supper,"
says the white-whiskered Chicano
I give a ride to the El Rio
Neighborhood Center.

"I'm 62 now.
If I live to 65 I get Social Security.
I don't know.
None of my friends live that long."